

**DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE**

**PRESENTATION TO THE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY INSTALLATIONS AND  
FACILITIES,  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**SUBJECT: CONDITION OF MILITARY FACILITIES: EFFECTS  
ON READINESS AND QUALITY OF LIFE**

**STATEMENT OF MAJOR GENERAL EARNEST O. ROBBINS II  
THE CIVIL ENGINEER  
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE**

**April 26, 2001**

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED  
BY THE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**



Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the condition of the Air Force's facilities and the consequential effects on readiness and quality of life. First, I must remind you that our FY02 budget is still under development, as part of the Secretary's strategic review. That budget, when complete, will include funding to cover the Department's most pressing priorities. I ask that you consider my comments in that light.

### **Quality of Life**

The Air Force has realized for many years that providing our people with safe, efficient, and modern places to live and work has a positive impact on readiness. In the mid-1980s and early-1990s, we made substantial progress in providing quality facilities and modernizing supporting infrastructure. Since then, investment in Air Force facilities has declined as a result of constrained defense budgets and competing Air Force requirements, and we now see growth in the backlog of work necessary to maintain the readiness edge we established in past years. We must balance funding among the priorities of people, readiness, modernization, and infrastructure. In September, 1998 our Chief of Staff, General Ryan, stated that, "Because of funding shortfalls, we have significantly under-invested in our base operating support, real property maintenance, family housing, and military construction. We cannot continue to mortgage this area of our force readiness without significant long-term effects." That

statement remains true today [and we are working to build a budget that will meet this challenge](#). Meanwhile, expectations of our commanders, our people and our families remain high as they expect us to balance direct mission support and quality-of-life efforts in the face of aging infrastructure and very constrained military construction and real property maintenance budgets.

## **People**

Family well being and quality of life is an essential aspect of Air Force readiness. With the increased operational tempo, coupled with the increasing number of married Air Force members, our leaders recognize the integral link between family readiness and total force readiness. A key element of our quality of life initiatives is our goal to provide access to adequate, safe, and affordable housing to our Airmen and their families. When members are deployed, it gives them the piece of mind knowing their families are being taken care of. We firmly believe providing quality accommodations improves our members' quality of life, increases their satisfaction with military service, and ultimately leads to increased readiness.

We have two long-range planning documents to guide our housing investments: The Air Force Dormitory Master Plan and the Air Force Family Housing Master Plan. These two planning documents have and continue to guide us in providing quality living conditions for our Airmen and their families.

The Dormitory Master Plan provides an integrated strategy for investing in and operating housing that meets the needs of our unaccompanied Airmen. The Plan is our “road map” for achieving the Air Force goal of providing, by 2009, a private room, the number one concern of our Airmen, with a shared bath and compact kitchen for all unaccompanied junior airmen (E-1s to E-4s) on base, both stateside and overseas. The OSD “1+1 construction standard” is our tool to achieving that goal.

Our Family Housing Master Plan provides a requirements-based investment strategy that upholds Air Force standards for quality of life and sustains our sense of community. The Master Plan integrates military family housing construction, operations and maintenance, and privatization funding into a single planning and programming “road map” to meet the Department of Defense goal to “...revitalize, divest through privatization, or demolish inadequate family housing by or before 2010.” Like the Dorm Master Plan, we are working to achieve our goal of providing adequate housing by 2010. But unfortunately due to constrained funding we are on track to meet the requirement in 2013. The Master Plan identifies our “worst first” requirements allowing us to use our limited funds where they are needed the most and at the same time keeping our good units good. [Let me add that the President’s priority on military housing is most welcome. The additional funding the President has proposed for housing will help accelerate the efforts to improve Air Force housing.”](#)

## **Quality of Life Enhancements**

The Air Force has benefited greatly over the past five years from congressional inserts and plus-ups to the MILCON and RPM accounts for quality-of-life enhancements. These efforts allowed the Air Force to improve conditions not only in our dormitories, but also in other traditional quality-of-life facilities such as Fitness Centers and Child Development Centers. We greatly appreciate your support, however, we still have a lot of work to do.

The two master plans mentioned earlier, addressing dormitories and family housing, respectively, have been extremely valuable tools in helping focus and guide our actions. Accordingly, we have just added to our arsenal a Fitness Center Master Plan. Together, these three plans guide us towards wise investments in our most urgent quality of life requirements.

## **Quality-of-life Extension**

The Air Force's definition of quality-of-life extends beyond family housing, dormitories, child development centers, and physical fitness facilities. We recognize that quality-of-life extends into the workplace as well and that the workplace environment plays an important role in readiness. Deteriorated facilities impair readiness by detracting from the quality of life of our Airmen and their families, by reducing the efficiency of uniformed and civilian workers, and by lowering retention rates of highly qualified and otherwise motivated people.

Unfortunately, our current real property maintenance (RPM) funding levels only allow us to provide day-to-day critical maintenance of our facilities and infrastructure. This limited funding has resulted in an increased backlog of requirements. To buy this backlog down to a desirable level by 2010 would require an additional \$1.2 billion per year.

As an example, take an airman whose job is to maintain an F-15 engine. He works in a hangar where the roof leaks. Every time it rains he's distracted from fixing the F-15 engine so he can move buckets around to catch the water. This is both a quality-of-life implication as well as a readiness impact when he is distracted from accomplishing his primary duties.

That same airman, the highly trained jet engine mechanic, joins a couple hundred of his best friends to do what we refer to as a "FOD walk." For an hour or more out of the workday, they all march shoulder-to-shoulder down the ramp in a straight line, looking for random pieces of loose concrete and joint sealant in order to prevent foreign object damage to aircraft. Our Airmen see this as a direct impact on quality-of-life. They are frustrated that they have to spend an increasing amount of time on non-productive efforts. The Air Force spends millions of dollars training these young airmen to work on sophisticated equipment, yet they are required to work many non-productive hours tending to their run-down workplaces. I think we're losing the battle to maintain the high standards our people have come

to expect and deserve.

## **Readiness**

What I have been saying so far leads to the topic of this hearing, “Condition of military facilities: effects on readiness and quality of life”. The Air Force is routinely trading off infrastructure and modernization funding to shore up near-term readiness. This continued decline in infrastructure funding has led to a steady deterioration of our facilities, which further impacts our readiness. We are in a slow death spiral. Our current real property maintenance (RPM) funding levels only allow us to provide minimal day-to-day critical maintenance of our facilities and infrastructure. Although the Air Force continues to operate, we are increasingly required to develop "work-arounds" which impact Air Force combat capability and operational efficiency. That airman I mentioned earlier, not only is he moving buckets around to catch the rain coming in from the leaking roof, he now has to find a tarp to cover his expensive engine diagnostic equipment, and when he has done all that, let's hope that he remembers where he left off on his maintenance checklist and does not skip a vital step.

## **Installation Readiness Report**

The Air Force tracks the condition of our facilities through the Installation Readiness Report (IRR). This report was developed and directed by OSD to be used by all the Services as the tool for tracking installation readiness. The IRR relates the impact of facilities on an installation's ability to support the Air Force mission. There are four



rating classes; C-1, only minor deficiencies with negligible impact on capability to perform required missions; C-2, some deficiencies with limited impact on capability to perform required missions; C-3, significant deficiencies that prevent it from performing some missions; and C-4, major deficiencies that preclude satisfactory mission accomplishment.

The basic methodology starts by totaling the dollar value of validated projects for maintenance, repair, and replacement and then divides the result by the plant replacement value, which is the cost to replace all the facilities associated with the particular facility class. The resulting percentage is then the baseline the installation commanders use before assessing for readiness implications. Today, 64 percent of our facility classes across our nine Major Air Commands, 26 Field Operating Agencies and four Direct Reporting units are at a level that prevents satisfactory mission accomplishment.

For example, the airfield at Dyess AFB, Texas, rated C-4, just recently began operating under an advisory that prohibits touch-and-go operations for heavy aircraft because of the foreign object damage potential from deteriorated runway shoulders. It will cost us over \$3 million to put that facility back to a C-2 status. Until then, our operations will continue to be limited. Many bases have portions of aprons or taxiways, which cannot be used, due to deteriorated pavement. We currently have a backlog of over \$116 million in critical airfield repair projects alone.

Other examples are: Andrews AFB underground electrical system is severely corroded causing major power outages to the runway navigational lights, backup generators are on constant standby, \$12.2 million required for repair; Travis AFB suspended routine operations on runway 21R/03L due to a 90-foot-long, 4-6 inch wide crack, \$1.0M required for repair; Kirtland AFB power to the hangar maintenance bay is disconnected for safety reasons, temporary power units run all aircraft maintenance increasing aircraft turn around time by 20%, \$1.2M required for electrical system repair

### **Recapitalization**

Today, the average Air Force facility is approximately 40 years old, with 25 percent of all facilities over 50 years old. At current funding levels, by 2020 over half of our facilities will be over 50 years old. A 50-year service life for facilities is a commonly used standard in private industry.

While there are clearly several areas where we have achieved notable successes as a result of excellent congressional support, continued constraints in RPM and military construction are beginning to show in degraded facilities and supporting infrastructure. The results are reduced productivity on the flightline, serious infrastructure deficiencies, and sub-par administrative facilities across the Air Force. In order to recapitalize our physical plant, we would require approximately \$2.9 billion per year to reach a 50-year recapitalization

rate based on our current inventory.

### **Infrastructure Reduction**

On a positive note, Air Force demolition efforts continue to be a success story that has enabled us to reduce the strain on our infrastructure funding, by ensuring we're getting rid of facilities we don't need. From FY96 through FY00, we demolished 14 million-square feet of building space. This is equivalent to demolishing **six** Air Force bases equal to the combined square footage of Whiteman, Goodfellow, Moody, Brooks, Vance, and Pope Air Force Bases.

### **Force Protection**

Another key element to readiness and one receiving a considerable amount of attention recently is force protection. Two years ago, before this committee, we stated that force protection was one of our more urgent requirements. I assure you it remains a top priority today. We require Anti-Terrorism/Force Protection measures be incorporated into our projects during the development phase. Accordingly, our project scope and costs reflect this in our annual MILCON program submittals.

Currently we are looking at measures of protection for our existing facilities. These measures include; effectiveness of installing blast resistant windows and doors, strategically placing trees and shrubs to reduce line-of-sight, and increasing the standoff perimeter. We try to implement these measures where ever possible within our constrained funding.

## **Conclusion**

As engineers it is our responsibility to provide policy-makers and decision-makers with informed assessments of requirements, along with our best judgements regarding impacts on readiness and quality-of-life. We'll continue to make the best use of resources at our disposal and, just as importantly, the ingenuity and dedication of our people-our officers, enlisted personnel, civilians, and contractors, to operate and maintain our bases to the best of our ability. However, tough choices still lie ahead for the Air Force.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I want to thank this committee for its strong support of Air Force programs and the benefits they have provided the Air Force in terms of readiness, retention, recruiting and the quality of life for our people. I will be happy to address any questions.